



News Release

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Percentage of Uninsured in Utah Increases

(Salt Lake City, UT) - Nationally, 46 million Americans, including more than 8 million children, are living without health insurance. Mirroring national trends, the 2005 Utah Health Status Survey (UHSS) conducted by the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) found an increase in both the number and percentage of Utahns who lacked any kind of health insurance. The most recent survey results indicate that between 2004 and 2005 Utah's uninsured population has grown from an estimated 251,500 (10.6%) to 292,800 (11.6%).

“This translates to about 41,300 additional Utahns without health insurance,” said David N. Sundwall, M.D., Executive Director, UDOH, and co-chair of Governor Huntsman's Health Insurance for the Uninsured Workgroup. “The Governor's Workgroup has been meeting with key stakeholders and business representatives around the state in order to find out the extent of the problems and what will work in Utah to address the issue.”

The following groups of Utahns were more likely to lack health insurance:

- Young adults aged 19 to 26 (23.3% lacked health insurance).
- Utahns with household incomes at or below 200% of the poverty level (23.4% lacked health insurance). Over two-thirds (68.8%) of uninsured Utahns lived in these households at or near the federal poverty level.
- Adult Utahns who did not have a high school diploma (47.4%).
- Utahns who were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (37.4%).

The majority of Utahns who had health insurance received it through a current or former or employer or union (77.5%). However this percentage has decreased over the past few years while the percentage of persons receiving insurance through Medicaid (8.7%), Medicare

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(10.6%), or CHIP (5.9%) has been increasing. About one-third (27.5%) of the uninsured had access to an employer sponsored insurance plan, but declined because of cost or people did not think they needed health insurance.

Uninsured Utahns were less likely to have had a usual source of medical care (68.2% vs. 96.2% for those with coverage) or a routine medical visit in the last year (57.8% vs. 72.6% for those with coverage). Utahns who lack health insurance were also more likely to seek primary care from an emergency department or urgent care center (9.5% vs. 4.9%). One-third of uninsured Utahns reported difficulty receiving needed medical care because of cost, and 13.6% reported that they did not have enough money for food, heat or other basic necessities after paying for prescription medications.

Factors contributing to an increase in uninsured Utahns include the percentage of employers who offer health insurance, the cost of insurance premiums to employers, employees, and individual purchasers, rising costs of health care locally and nationally and general economic conditions affecting individuals and businesses.

The UHSS is a statewide household survey conducted by the UDOH to measure health insurance status and health care access on an annual basis. It is representative of the non-institutionalized Utah population living in households with telephones.

For a copy of the Utah Health Status Update *Uninsured in Utah 2005*, visit:

http://ibis.health.utah.gov/home/opha_publications_chron.html

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.